

# Red Seas, White Sands, Blue Skies: An American Citizens Services Newsletter



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## MESSAGE FROM THE CONSUL GENERAL



*It has been an honor to serve as Consul General to the U.S. Mission in Saudi Arabia. As I prepare to depart Riyadh for training and home leave in the U.S. on route to my next assignment, I look back on these past 19 months with fondness. It will be difficult to say good-bye to the many wonderful friends I've made among the resident American community as well as Saudi colleagues. I can leave with confidence in knowing that our top notch team in the American Citizens Services (ACS) Section will continue*

*its high level of service to our citizens.*

*I am looking forward to the opportunity to say good-bye in person at ACS' upcoming Town Hall meeting on Monday, April 16 from 18:30 - 21:00 at the United States Embassy Recreation Association (USERA) Annex. For those who are planning to attend, please remember to RSVP before noon on Wednesday, April 11, by e-mail to:*  
[Riyadh.ACS@state.gov](mailto:Riyadh.ACS@state.gov).

*Best regards,  
Glen Keiser, Consul General*

## U.S. VISA PROCESSING FEE CHANGES

Effective April 13, 2012, U.S. visa processing fees will change. While the fees for most nonimmigrant visa applications and Border Crossing Cards will increase, all immigrant visa processing fees will decrease.

The U.S. Department of State is required by law to recover, as far as possible, the cost of processing visas through the collection of application fees, also called Machine Readable Visa (MRV) fees. A cost-of-service model is updated annually to determine direct and indirect costs to the U.S. government when providing all consular services, such as non-immigrant visa processing. This update was completed in December 2011 and shows that certain categories of nonimmigrant visas cost more to process than other categories of visas. The new fees reflect the costs of each visa service.

The MRV fee increase - from \$140 to \$160 - will support the addition and expansion of overseas facilities, as well as additional staffing required to meet in-

creased visa demand. The last increase in MRV fees was June 5, 2010.

Although most categories of nonimmigrant visa processing fees will increase, the fee for E visas (treaty-traders and treaty-investors) and K visas (for fiancé(e)s of U.S. citizens) will decrease.

Because of a reallocation of costs associated with immigrant visas, all categories of immigrant visa processing fees will also decrease.

Applicants will be charged the fee in effect on the day of payment. For fees that are increasing, receipts for payments made prior to the fee changes will be accepted for 90 days after the fee takes effect, or through July 12, 2012. In categories where fees are declining, no refunds will be available for those who paid prior to the effective date; however, these receipts are valid for the usual one year from the date of issuance.

Fee information may be found on the Bureau of Consular Affairs website, [travel.state.gov](http://travel.state.gov), and on the U.S. Embassy website.

## How to Reach Us

**The US Embassy is located in the Diplomatic Quarter, in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.**

**Public hours:** Saturdays, Sundays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, 1:00pm-3:30pm

*Schedule an Appointment:*  
<https://evisaforms.state.gov/acs/default.asp?>

[postcode=RID&appcode=1](https://evisaforms.state.gov/acs/default.asp?)

**Phone:** (966)(1)488-3800

**US Consulate Jeddah**

**Public hours:** Saturday/Monday/Tuesday/Wednesday, 1:00-3:00pm

*Schedule an Appointment:*  
<https://evisaforms.state.gov/acs/default.asp?>

[postcode=JDD&appcode=1](https://evisaforms.state.gov/acs/default.asp?)

**Phone:** (966)(2)667-0080

**US Consulate Dhahran**

**Public hours:** Saturday through Wednesday, 1:00-3:30 pm

*Schedule an Appointment:* <https://evisaforms.state.gov/acs/default.asp?>

[postcode=dhr&appcode=1](https://evisaforms.state.gov/acs/default.asp?)

**Phone:** (966)(3)330-3200

# FREQUENTLY ASKED VOTING QUESTIONS

## **Can I vote absentee?**

You can vote absentee in any election for Federal office if you are a U.S. citizen 18 years or older and are a U.S. citizen residing outside the United States.

available. The online version of the form must be mailed in an envelope with proper postage, or mailed using our prepaid return envelope.

Your Voter Registration/Absentee Ballot Request form must be completed, printed, signed, dated and mailed directly to your local election official.

## **Can I register or vote in-person at the embassy or consulate?**

There are no provisions for in-person voting or on-site registration at U.S. embassies or consulates. U.S. embassy and consular officials can assist U.S. citizens in completing the Voter Registration/Absentee Ballot Request form or other election materials for their State, witness election materials (if required), and provide other absentee voting information.

You may mail election materials from U.S. embassies and consulates. Remember to make sure that all election material is postmarked.

## **Do I have to be registered to vote absentee?**

Registration requirements vary from State to State. Most States and territories require registration to vote absentee. Voter registration and absentee ballot request can be done at the same time by submitting the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) and can be easily and automatically completed by using the FPCA wizard at FVAP.gov. If you are already registered to vote and only wish to request a ballot, you should submit your FPCA as soon as possible.

## **Where do I send my Voter Registration/Absentee Ballot Request?**

Your request form must be completed, printed, signed, dated and mailed directly to

your local election official. Some States allow your request to be faxed or email to our local election office. These officials will handle the processing and distribution of your absentee ballots and may need to contact you for further information or clarification. To facilitate this process, please provide a current email address, phone and fax number on your application.

## **When mailing election materials to my State or territory, do I have to pay postage?**

When mailed from any U.S. post office, U.S. embassy or consulate, or APO/FPO mail facility, the hardcopy voter registration/absentee ballot form is postage-paid. In order to receive free postage, the online version of the form must be mailed in an envelope printed with our postage-paid envelope template. You may mail the completed form in an envelope with proper postage affixed. Ensure that your form is postmarked (see postmarking instructions below) and sent to arrive before your State's specific deadline. You must pay postage

## **If I do not maintain a legal residence in the U.S., what is my "legal State of residence"?**

Your "legal State of residence" for voting purposes is the State or territory where you last resided immediately prior to your departure from the United States. This applies to overseas citizens even though you may not have property or other ties in your last State of residence and your intent to return to that State may be uncertain.

When completing block 7 of the Voter Registration/Absentee Ballot Request form, be sure to enter the entire mailing address of your last residence, including rural route and number. That address determines your proper voting jurisdiction.

Some States allow children of U.S. citizens residing overseas who are U.S. citizens but who have never resided in the U.S., to claim one of their parent's legal State of residence as their own. Check out our list of States allowing this.

## **How do I register to vote, or apply for an absentee ballot?**

You may register and request an absentee ballot with a single form: The Federal Post Card Application. This application form is accepted by all States and territories and is postage-paid in the U.S. mail, including the Military Postal System and State Department Pouch mail. Hard copies of the form can be obtained from a U.S. embassy or consulate or requested directly from the Federal Voting Assistance Program by contacting us.

An online version of the Voter Registration/Absentee Ballot Request form is also



# STIONS FOR OVERSEAS CITIZENS

if the materials are mailed from a non-U.S. postal facility.

It is recommended that voted ballots be mailed from your location outside the U.S. rather than be given to another individual to be placed in the U.S. postal system. If the ballot is postmarked from any location inside the U.S. your local election official may not count your ballot.

## **What is a postmark and how do I make sure I get one?**

A postmark is a postal marking made on a piece of mail indicating the date and time that the item was accepted by the postal service. Postmarks are used to determine if voting materials have been mailed by State deadlines. Due to varying mail pick up times, the day you 'mail' your election mail may not be the day the postal facility postmarks it.

You may ask the mail clerk to hand stamp the election material so that a date is clearly visible. In certain situations a handwritten postmark and signature from you or a notarizing official

may be sufficient.

rough Voting Assistance Officers at military installations or at U.S. embassies/consulates. An online version is also available, which must be completed, printed, signed, dated, and mailed to your local election official. Check out your State's instructions to determine your State specific instructions, witness requirements for voted ballots, deadlines, and mailing addresses.

## **When is the best time to apply for an absentee ballot?**

We recommend that you register to vote/request an absentee ballot in January of each year, or at least 90 days before Election Day.

## **Must I submit a separate application for each election?**

A citizen does not need to submit a separate application for each election. The length of time an application is good for varies by State. Most accept the Federal Post Card Application as a request for all Federal office elections for the calendar year in which it was submitted. To ensure that you receive absentee ballots for all elections in which you are eligible to vote, we recommend that you submit a new Federal Post Card Application in January of each year and whenever you have a new mailing address. If you are requesting an absentee ballot for a specific election, note in Block 9 the election for which you are requesting the ballot, i.e., "Primary (or Special, or General) election only".

## **When should I receive my ballot?**

States and territories are required to mail ballots at least 45 days before an election. If you have not received your ballot 30 days before the election, contact your local election official (contact information available on most State election sites). If you encounter

problems contacting your local election official, contact us. Always complete and return your absentee ballot regardless of

when you receive it, even if you have already submitted a back-up Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (explanation below). Your local election official will ensure that only one of the ballots is counted.



## **What happens if I do not receive a ballot from my local election office?**

If you requested an absentee ballot but have not received one close to Election Day, you can still vote by using the back-up Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB).

In order to be eligible to use this back-up ballot, you must:

Be absent from your voting residence;  
Have applied for a regular ballot early enough so the request is received by the appropriate local election official not later than the State deadline; or the date that is 30 days before the general election; AND Have not received the requested regular absentee ballot from the State.

## **Where can I get a back-up Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot?**

The back-up Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB) can be easily and automatically completed by using the FPCA wizard at FVAP.gov.

Hardcopies are available through Voting Assistance Officers at military installations or at U.S. embassies/consulates. An online version is also available, which must be completed, printed, signed, dated, and mailed to your local election official. Check out your State's instructions to determine your State specific instructions, witness requirements for voted ballots, deadlines, and mailing addresses.





## 2012 Primary Elections - April—June 2012

### April

District of Columbia - April 3 (P, S)  
 Maryland- April 3 (P, S)  
 Mississippi- April 3 (R)  
 Wisconsin- April 3 (P)  
 Alabama- April 24 (R)  
 Connecticut- April 24 (P)  
 Delaware- April 24 (P)  
 New York- April 24 (P)  
 Pennsylvania - April 24 (P, S)  
 Rhode Island - April 24 (P)

### May

Indiana - May 8 (P, S)  
 North Carolina - May 8 (P, S)  
 West Virginia - May 8 (P, S)  
 Idaho - May 15 (P, S)  
 Nebraska - May 15 (P, S)  
 Oregon - May 15 (P, S)  
 Arkansas - May 22(P, S)  
 Kentucky - May 22 (P, S)  
 Texas - May 29 (P, S)

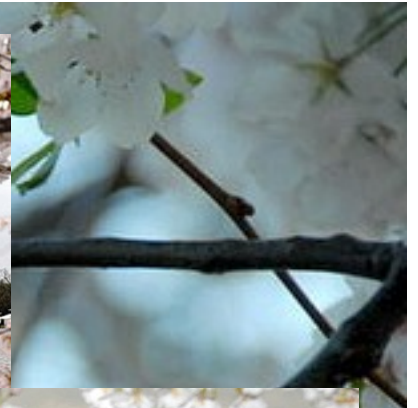
### Legend

**P- Presidential Preference Primary**  
**S- State Primary**  
**R- Runoff Primary**

### June

California - June 5 (P, S)  
 Iowa - June 5 (S)  
 Montana - June 5 (P, S)  
 New Jersey - June 5 (P, S)  
 New Mexico - June 5 (P,S)  
 South Dakota - June 5 (P)  
 Texas - June 5 (R)  
 Arkansas - June 12 (R)  
 Maine - June 12 (S)  
 Nevada - June 12 (S)  
 North Dakota - June 12 (S)  
 South Carolina - June 12 (S)  
 Virginia - June 12 (S)  
 South Dakota - June 19 (R)  
 Colorado- June 26 (S)  
 New York- June 26 (S)  
 Oklahoma- June 26 (S)  
 South Carolina - June 26 (R)  
 Utah - June 26 (S, P-Republican)

## Cherry Blossom Festival Washington, DC



### Did you know...?

- The first e-file was in 1986.
- The first income tax ever was in 1404 in England.
- At the beginning of the French Revolution, tax collectors were sent to the guillotine.

## IRS Social Media Tools Help At Tax Deadline

Department of State

The IRS uses new and social media tools to share the latest information on tax changes, initiatives, products and services.

The IRS has launched IRS2Go, a smart-phone application that lets you interact with the IRS using your mobile device. The mobile application includes the following features:

- Get your refund status;
- Get tax updates; and
- Follow the IRS.

The IRS participates on the following social media platforms, including:

•**YouTube** — The IRS has video channels that provide short, informative videos on various tax related topics in English, American Sign Language (ASL) and a variety of foreign languages.

•**Twitter** — IRS tweets include various tax-related announcements, news for tax professionals and hiring initiatives.

•**Facebook** — IRS has Facebook pages that post valuable tax information for tax professionals and those needing help in resolving long standing issues with the IRS.

Additionally, the IRS has developed its own new media tools to help share important tax information.

### Audio files for Podcasts

The IRS creates audio files for use in podcasts. These short audio recordings provide useful information on one tax related topic. The audio files and their transcripts can be found in the Multimedia Center on IRS.gov. These files are also available as podcasts on iTunes.

### Widgets

Widgets are tools that can be placed on websites, blogs or social media networks to direct others to IRS.gov for information. The IRS has developed a variety of widgets that feature the latest tax initiatives and programs. These widgets can be found on Marketing Express, the marketing site that allows IRS partners and tax preparers to customize their IRS communications products.

To find links to all of IRS's social media tools, visit <http://www.irs.gov>.



### Are you or is someone you know a newcomer to Saudi Arabia?

*Help newcomers to the Kingdom by reminding them to register with the Embassy or nearest Consulate using **STEP** online at: <https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/ui/>*

*This free service offers registered U.S. citizens updates on important regional issues, travel warnings and alerts, and provides a point of contact for citizens and their families in case of emergency.*

## US TAXES – DUE DATES AND EXTENSION DEADLINES



### April 17, 2012

**Return:** Individual Income Tax Returns for the calendar year 2011 are due for filers living in the US. However, filers who live overseas may receive an automatic extension to June 15th to file their returns.

**Payment:** Payments for 2011 taxes due. All payments are due on April 17th regardless of where you live. If you qualify for the automatic extension to file, but you anticipate owing tax, make your payment by April 17th by submitting your check with a 2011 Form 1040-V.

**Extension:** If you do not qualify for the automatic extension, submit Form 4868 to request an extension to file until October 15th. If you anticipate owing tax, attach your check to the 2011 Form 4868.

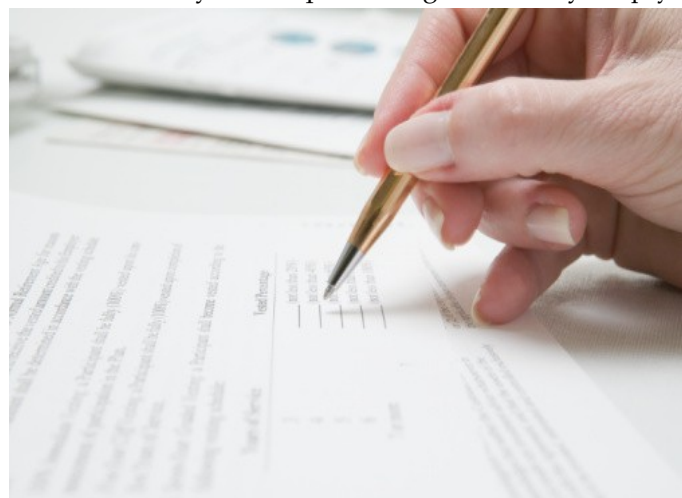
### June 15, 2012

**Return:** Individual Income tax return is due for taxpayers abroad. Write "Taxpayer Resident Abroad" across the top of your return.

**Extension: Overseas** filers should submit Form 4868 by June 15th to request an extension to file until October 15th.

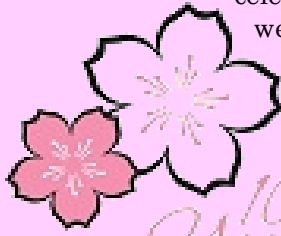
**Estimated:** Second quarter estimated tax payment due. Use the 2012 Form 1040 ES.

**Form 2350:** Overseas filers who need additional time in order to meet the overseas residency requirements for Form 2555 must file Form 2350 by this date.





The National Cherry Blossom Festival is the nation's greatest springtime celebration. The 2012 Festival, March 20 – April 27, includes 5 spectacular weeks of events featuring diverse and creative programming promoting traditional and contemporary arts and culture, natural beauty, and community spirit. The 2012 Festival commemorates the 100th anniversary of the gift of the cherry blossom trees and the enduring friendship between the United States and Japan.



100  
Years  
1912-2012

CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION  
OF THE GIFT OF TREES

On March 27, the National Cherry Blossom Festival held a Tree Planting Ceremony with First Lady Michelle Obama, dignitaries from the United States and Japan, as well as school children. A single tree was planted in West Potomac Park adjacent to the Tidal Basin, commemorating the centennial anniversary. The ceremony also symbolizes the longevity of the original gift and the millions who will continue to enjoy the nation's greatest springtime celebration in Washington, DC.



"Chopping down the cherry tree" was one of the famous stories of Washington as a child.

## Did George Washington Chop Down a Cherry Tree?

The cherry tree is deeply embedded into the history of the United States thanks to this long-lived fable. The first president of the United States did not chop down a cherry tree and proclaim he couldn't tell a lie. The fable was written by Mason Locke Weems and printed in *The Life of Washington* in 1809. The fable remains popular, however, and continues to be used as a tool to teach children the reward of telling the truth.

Images from the Cherry Blossom Festival in Washington, D.C.

